

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA  
DENNIS DAUGAARD, GOVERNOR

April 14, 2014

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

VIA FAX: 202.720.2166

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

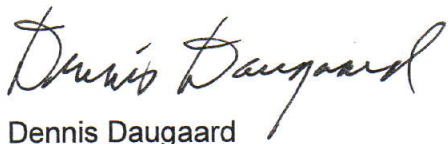
South Dakotans value landscape conservation, and I was encouraged to see programs contained in the 2014 Farm Bill that focus on specific issues within geographic regions. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is an excellent example. I am writing today to ask you to consider designating the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa as a Critical Conservation Area under the RCPP.

The PPR is a regional priority area of national significance. It contains a substantial portion of the Mississippi River headwaters, which significantly impact water quality in the Gulf of Mexico. The area is known as the "factory" for North American waterfowl populations because of its diverse and extensive collection of native prairie and wetlands. With the vast majority of the PPR's land base in private ownership, funding through RCPP could help provide necessary resources to benefit soil, water, and wildlife conservation efforts while working in concert with landowner operations.

The Prairie Pothole Joint Venture implementation plan has guided bird conservation efforts within the PPR for many years. It has been endorsed by and includes partners from many federal agencies, state wildlife agencies, non-governmental organizations, and landowners. The plan utilizes a strategic, science-based approach to address the conservation needs of the various bird populations in the PPR. Designating the PPR as a Critical Conservation Area under the RCPP will enhance on-going conservation efforts and further strengthen the already strong public-private relationships.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Dennis Daugaard

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